



News Release

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

437th AIRLIFT WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

102 East Hill Blvd., Rm. 223, Charleston AFB, S.C. 29404-5154
Phone: (843) 963-5608, 5588 or 5589 Fax (843) 963-5604

PAO email: edmund.memi@charleston.af.mil

After duty hours, call the base operator or
command post (963-2531) & ask for a PA rep

Release No. 09-06

September 21, 2001

CAFB RESERVISTS RESPOND TO TRAGEDY:

CHARLESTON AIR FORCE BASE, S.C. – Thirteen members of the 315th Mission Support Squadron Services Flight departed Charleston AFB for Dover AFB, Del., Sept. 13 to aid mortuary affairs personnel there.

Members of the all-volunteer team left their jobs and families on a moment's notice to help where they could, according to Maj. Tom Egbert, 315th Services Flight commander.

Egbert and his team will perform a variety of duties, he said. In addition to assisting in identifying victims, the team will preserve the victims' personal effects, assemble uniforms and help out in any other way required.

This is the second real-world incident Egbert has responded to. The first was an Army helicopter crash.

"I know what's coming," he said. "You just have to stay focused on the job you have to do and keep your mind from wandering. You don't think about the kids without a dad or mom or the wife without a husband."

This is also the second incident for Master Sgt. Tom Dombrowski, 315 MSS, who was with Egbert in responding to the helicopter crash.

"Somebody has to do it," Dombrowski said. "I'm not looking forward to it."

Dombrowski's son is going up a rank in Boy Scouts this weekend. "I'll miss his corps of honor," Dombrowski said.

His job will miss him, too. Dombrowski works in the 315th Airlift Wing's budget office.

"It's closeout time," Dombrowski said, referring to the end of the fiscal year. "It really puts a strain on everyone else in the office, but they know this is a job that must be done."

All of the team members made sacrifices to help out, and Tech. Sgt. Deborah Fraser, 315 MSS, is no exception.

Fraser is leaving behind a seven-week-old baby to help where she can.

"It's very difficult," Fraser said. "But I thought of the families; how important it is for them to have their loved ones; to say goodbye. It's hard to believe something like this could happen in the U.S."

This is the second mortuary affairs team Fraser has worked with. She also responded with a 315 MSS team to Dover AFB following the tragedy on the USS Cole.

For many of the volunteers, helping out was something they said they had to do.

"You're home sitting in front of the TV wondering what you can do to help," said Staff Sgt. Edna Doctor, 315 MSS. "We have a chance to do something."

In the past, Doctor responded to two Army helicopter crashes.

"The hardest thing for me last time was going through personal effects," Doctor said. "Seeing the families in pictures, going through the things they had on them when they died was hard, especially the ones with kids."

Doctor's eleven-year-old daughter was concerned about her mother leaving.

"I told her we were okay, we weren't going to New York or Washington," said Doctor. "I did tell her we were driving instead of flying. I didn't want her to be afraid."

"It's been a long day," Doctor continued, "We've been here since 7:30 a.m., just waiting. But this whole thing made me realize life is so short, so it doesn't bother me to sit and wait."

Waiting next to Doctor was a City of Charleston police officer.

“They are always supportive,” said Staff Sgt. Barbara Brown, 315 MSS, in reference to her employers.

“I don’t know why I do this,” Brown said. “I just enjoy helping other people.”

As for the job she has to do, Brown said, “It doesn’t bother me until, like, the second day, that’s when you can’t sleep. By the third and fourth day, everything seems normal.”

Brown has been a Reserve member since 1992.

The team has no idea how long they will be needed, but their orders are cut for 15 days, said Egbert.

Maj. Connie Alge, 315 MSS, summed up the team’s courage, “These people really show that patriotism is alive and well.”

(For more information, contact Master Sgt. Dan Murphy at 963-5582 or Staff Sgt. Pamela Smith at 963-5589)